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**Department of Commerce and Insurance
Commissioner Leslie Shechter Newman**

NEWS RELEASE

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**TENNESSEE ATTORNEY GENERAL WARNS CONSUMERS
OF EMPLOYMENT SCAMS**

If you are trying to find a new job or change careers, Tennessee Attorney General Bob Cooper wants to make sure you do not fall victim to employment scams.

As part of National Consumer Protection Week, the Attorney General is reminding Tennesseans to use care to avoid becoming a victim of scam artists before buying products and services. One of those reminders includes some so-called job service assistants, who may try to sell you something of no value or something you could have gotten for free on your own.

Classified ads offering jobs with the United States Postal Service often lure consumers to call a toll-free number only to be asked to pay a "registration fee" for a postal exam. Scam artists also attempt to sell consumers a booklet which touts information they claim will help job candidates prepare for the postal exam with practice tests. Oftentimes those same con artists claim buying a "study guide" will guarantee job hunters not only a high or passing score on the postal exam, but a job with the Postal Service as well. After paying the fees, consumers typically receive the same information that is available free from the USPS.

"At the beginning of a new year, many people get anxious about job layoffs or self-improvement and may be tempted to rush into something that looks promising," said Attorney

General Cooper. “But it’s important to question claims of finding high-paying jobs for little effort. Legitimate employers such as the U.S. Postal Service do not charge registration fees, sell study materials or guarantee anyone they will be hired.”

Consumers may also be faced with “career counseling” agencies which offer to improve a consumer’s resume and interview skills as well as evaluate their strengths to determine the career which best suits them. These agencies often mislead consumers into believing the agency will find them a job, sometimes through the agency’s “network” of contacts which are referred to repeatedly during the sales pitch. Questionable agencies may tell consumers there is a “hidden job market,” which will bypass human resources personnel and place consumers directly in front of the “decision makers.” The job hunters often discover the ruse after paying large fees in advance.

Consumers searching for employment should be wary of:

- *Anyone charging for information about government jobs;
- *A guarantee of a job if the consumer purchases study or other materials;
- *Career counseling agencies which promise to get you a job;
- *Employment agencies requesting you to pay them before they find you a job;
- *Agencies touting “hidden” jobs and connections no one else has to those jobs;
- *High pressure sales tactics pressuring you to “buy now,” and
- *Vague answers to important questions you ask, or no answers at all.

More helpful information for finding employment include the following tips:

- *Take your time before buying something and do not give in to high pressure sales tactics;
- *Guard personal information and only give out such information if you know who you are giving it to, why it’s needed and how it will be used.
- *Fully read all documents before signing a contract;
- *Be wary of any business that will not put their promises to you in writing;
- *Check out companies before making a purchase by contacting the Division of Consumer Affairs, the Federal Trade Commission or the Better Business Bureau.

If you are the victim of an employment scam or wish to file a complaint about any consumer matter, contact the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-342-8385 (toll free) or online, at www.state.tn.us/consumer. You can also file complaints online with Consumer Sentinel at www.consumer.gov/sentinel/.